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A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED ON THE

F A S T D A Y,

Friday the 4th of February, 1780,

B Y

The Rev. Mr. HARRISON.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

671

MEMORANDUM

1800

THE REV. MR. HARRISON.

PRICE ONE SHILLING

A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT

Charlotte Street Chapel, Pimlico,

A N D

At ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH, in *Crooked Lane,*

On *Friday, February 4, 1780,*

B E I N G

The DAY appointed for a PUBLIC FAST;

A N D

On *Sunday* the 13th of the same Month

A T

B R O M P T O N C H A P E L.

B Y

The Rev. RICHARD HARRISON,

MINISTER of the said CHAPELS.

L O N D O N:

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T H E
P R E F A C E.

TRUTH, adorned with
all the elegance of dic-
tion and the flowers of rhetoric,
rarely does more than attract
the admiration of mankind: but
when cloathed in its native and
simple dress, convinces their
judgments,

vi P R E F A C E.

judgments, commands their attention, and is more generally useful, because more generally understood. Thus plainly apparelled, the author of the following discourse, ventures to send her forth into the world. He courts not applause; nor is he vain enough to think, that his sermon, as a composition, deserves it. His only wish is to do good; and he is persuaded, that if the readers of the following pages, will but peruse them as honestly as he wrote them, they will not be offended at that
zealous

P R E F A C E. vii

zealous freedom, with which he has animadverted on their conduct and follies : but, being assured that it is the language of truth and soberness, will obey the dictates of conviction, and amend their errors.

Then will the end of this Publication be fully answered; and to this end, the Writer sincerely prays, that the blessing of God may attend it.

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conduct and politics, but being
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the dictates of conviction, and
amend their errors.

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Then will the end of this
Publication be fully answered,
and to this end, the Writer
humbly prays, that the blessing
of God may attend it, and that
it may be a means of calling
down the Spirit of God upon
the Church, and the world,
to give up a testimony to
their own consciences, and the
conscience of the world, in
the most solemn manner.

REVELATION of St. JOHN

Chap. ii. ver. 5.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place.

IN the preceding chapter we find our blessed Saviour sending epistles by his servant John to the seven churches of Asia,---which he calls the seven golden candlesticks,---to warn them of the fatal consequences of the corruptions that were then creeping in amongst them.

B

This

This is part of the epistle which he sent to the church of Ephesus; to which he thus writes in the verses immediately before the text: “ I know thy works,
 “ and thy labour, and thy patience,
 “ and how thou canst not bear them
 “ which are evil: and thou hast tried
 “ them which say they are apostles and
 “ are not; and hast found them liars:
 “ and hast borne, and hast patience,
 “ and for my name’s sake hast laboured,
 “ and hast not fainted. Nevertheless,
 “ I have somewhat to say unto thee,
 “ because thou hast left thy first love.
 “ Remember therefore from whence
 “ thou art fallen, and repent, and do
 “ the first works; or else I will come
 “ unto thee quickly, and will remove
 “ thy candlestick out of his place.”

What a dreadful commination is here! The Ephesians had most probably only abated of their first love, and zeal for the everlasting gospel; and their Saviour threatens them, that unless they repented and returned to their first works, he would speedily remove the light of
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that gospel from them, and destroy their church. “ I will come unto thee
 “ quickly, and will remove thy candlestick, or church, out of his place.”

And can we, who I fear are much more corrupted than the church of Ephesus was, hear this awful threatening without trembling for ourselves? Without trembling, indeed, if we reflect a moment on our present unhappy situation!

Have we not all been this day summoned by royal authority to humble ourselves before the Almighty, and to pray for deliverance from enemies that surround us on every side; and who may too soon become powerful instruments in the hands of a provoked God, to remove his light and protection from us, both as a church and people; unless we remember from whence we are fallen, and repent, and do the first works?

Permit me then, as a faithful monitor, to shew you your degeneracy, both in a spiritual and civil view: and may God Almighty prosper the attempt of

his unworthy servant, and so bless the pious endeavours of those faithful watchmen, who shall this day have courage to cry aloud, and spare not, that the prayers of a distressed people, lamenting their sins, and acknowledging their wretchedness, may enter into the ears of the Most High; and procure for them that divine protection and support, which they now so very greatly stand in need of.

It is, I believe, a prevailing opinion with many people in the world, at least with many that I have conversed with; that we have as much religion, and morality, and as little sin as our forefathers. I cannot think so. Within the compass of my own life, I perceive a manifest difference; nor can I find an æra since we became a protestant church and people, when such an irreligious, wicked, unbelieving, luxurious, and dissipated spirit prevailed, as marks the present times.

And first, if we consider ourselves as a church,---I mean as a protestant church
at

at large, without regard to particular distinctions,---are we not greatly degenerated ?

Is not that part of it which dissented from the national way of worship only as to mode, but in essentials was formerly perhaps most strictly orthodox, now very miserably corrupted? Are not too many of its members dwindled into meer deistical moralists, or infidel reasoners? * A woeful proof this, of the sad effects which must necessarily follow, when the teachers of God's word set up their own reason as the only judge of that word, and are determined that the revelation of the
Most

* The writer means not here to insinuate, that deism and infidelity prevail only among the dissenters: God knows! the church at large is too much infected with such principles. His intention was solely to shew, that corruption has made its way even into a part of the protestant church, which was formerly remarkable for its strict adherence to the essential doctrines of the gospel. But he hopes, as there are still many evangelical teachers amongst them, that they will manfully endeavour to rescue their fallen members from error, by zealously standing up for that faith which was once delivered to the saints.

Most High shall in every point submit to the puny understanding of man.

And while one part of the church has fallen into the cold morals of the deist, or, what I fear is yet worse, the immorality of the infidel; has not another part of it run furiously into the intemperate heat of the extreme tenets of Calvinism *? Forsaking the prudent zeal of a Beveridge, and the rational and evangelical doctrines of the divines of his time, have not the vital principles of the gospel, and the true faith and practice of the Christian, been lost in the wild rhapsodies of antinomianism, or the uncharitable opinions of bigotry?

But corruption like a deluge has spread itself still further. Where is that fervent, but manly and solid spirit
of

* Not all, but the rigid Calvinists only are here intended: in opposition to whom the author thinks the rigid Arminians are equally censurable. He perfectly agrees with the Rev. and pious Mr. Fletcher, of Madely, that truth, as it is in the gospel, may be found by reconciling the opinions of the candid Arminian and the candid Calvinist. To his little tract intitled *The Reconciliation*, he refers the reader.

of devotion, that adorned the days of the pious Nelson : when we formed ourselves into Religious Societies to promote the honour and glory of the great God, and to edify one another in the ways of righteousness and truth ? Alas ! is it not sunk, either into a lifeless formality on the one hand, or caprice and humour on the other ? How many are there amongst us,---ministers as well as people,---whose devotion consists only in a languid and spiritless round of attendance upon outward ordinances ? and how many more, who place the whole of their religion in being pleased---pleased to hear themselves flattered in a florid essay on the excellency of virtue, or the dignity of human nature, delivered by a *petit maitre*, exactly resembling his own smooth, well-varnished tale ?

But this is not all : Should we investigate the matter more closely, I am afraid we shall find a far superior number, who have not even this shell of religion ; who are degenerated into nothing

things;—and these perhaps the immediate descendents of ancestors, who were accustomed to keep God's sabbaths, and at the head of their children and domestics constantly attended and revered his sanctuary. What a fallen posterity! How very differently are *their* sabbaths employed!—Spent in the expensive pleasures of a country excursion, while their unhappy families are left to connections and pursuits, which can hardly fail to be their ruin!

Our church being thus corrupted both in principle and practice, can we wonder that temples of pleasure are multiplying in every quarter? while the pious establishments of our ancestors, and the various opportunities which their benevolence afforded posterity of spending their leisure evening hours in a much more profitable manner, are most of them totally neglected; and the rest so coldly attended, that they will soon, very probably, share the same lamentable fate.

Our

Our blessed Saviour complains to the church of Ephesus, that it had only abated of its first love to him. But what shall we say of our love to him? Is it not almost eradicated? How few are there in these days, who deserve the commendation he gave to that church; that "it had borne, and had patience, and for his name's sake had laboured, and had not fainted?" And so very sparingly are those characters sown amongst us, who, like them, "would not bear with those that were evil;" that the majority of mankind will now hardly bear with those that are good. As a proof of this, are not the names of demure, hypocritical pretenders to sanctity and religion, but too generally given to those, who will not run into the same excess of riot and dissipation with the rest of the world?

And what is yet worse, we have been so far, like the church of Ephesus, from trying and finding those "liars, who say they are apostles and are not;" that the very Fathers and Guardians of our church

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are

are asleep, while its enemies are quietly, but boldly and publicly, sowing the tares of heresy and infidelity amongst us.

Was it necessary to give a further proof of the degeneracy of our church, I need only mention our present manner of spending the holy season of Lent: a season, which our more pious forefathers used to dedicate to retirement and devotion. The reality, alas, is lost! The shadow only remains, and *that* is departing. Our prayers and humiliations are changing apace for masquerade and debauchery: and even our solemn Oratorios (which, to preserve some degree of decorum, were appointed as substitutes for much lighter entertainments), are now giving way to the profane love-dream of Acis and Galatea, and the Bacchanalian revels of an Alexander's feast.

But notwithstanding this melancholy description of a fallen church, I trust and hope, my friends, that there are still remaining in it some faithful servants of the most high God:---Some of those
humble

humble Christians, who, having searched the sacred records with a single eye, have found the following important truths clearly revealed there; and have been enabled by the grace and mercy of God, to apply them unmixed, either with the foolish wisdom or narrow doctrines of men, simply and savingly to their own souls: namely, That being sinners originally and actually, without ability to acquit themselves; Jesus Christ, who as God and man was qualified to make a perfect atonement for them, came into this miserable world; not only to redeem them from all past transgressions, but from all future iniquity; and also to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of every good and christian work.

May these few chosen people of God, few I fear by comparison,---be admitted like Moses to stand in the gap, and prevent the completion of this awful threatening, “ I will come unto thee
“ quickly, and will remove thy candle-
“ stick out of his place.”

But alas ! how little reason have we to expect this, if we proceed, in the next place, to consider our additional degeneracy as a People.

There was a time, when religious, honest, and frugal Britons not only excited the admiration, but also the envy of the world ; because they then were masters of it. How are the mighty fallen ! How changed the scene ! You have already heard your depravity, as a Church ; and when Religion begins to depart from a people, what tie is there to secure their Honesty ? That virtue, I may venture to say, was never at a lower ebb in this country, than at present. So great a variety of specious and wily arts to deceive, which were totally unknown to our forefathers, have lately sprung up amongst us, that it is now become very difficult to distinguish the upright dealer, from the shuffling villain. And should the infection continue to increase, I am afraid we may very soon (as the Philosopher did to look for a man),
light

light a candle at noon day, to seek for a virtue, for which we once were famous.

But we need not search far for the cause of this. O Frugality! thou great supporter of honesty, whither art thou fled? Hast thou not almost forsaken every order and rank of men? And how fatal has been the consequence! When the noble and the great discarded thee, their creditors were unpaid and ruined. When the sons of trade and commerce refused to entertain thee, they sunk into sharpening swindlers, or infamous bankrupts. And when even servants, whose scanty earnings admonished them to make thee their friend, denied thee admittance; have they not nourished their extravagancies at the expence of their employers?

Would to God that I were not now drawing the picture of my unhappy country! But is it not too striking a likeness? And when Religion, Honesty, and Frugality are swallowed up in impiety, chicanery, and profusion; can we be surprized, that being thus without

a principle to support us, we have fallen lower yet, by a more frequent commission, than was ever known at any period in this nation, of crimes that set even human and divine obligations at defiance? I mean the shameful breach of the marriage contract, and the horrid sin of self-murder.

Thus have I endeavoured with that freedom of speech, which becomes every faithful minister on these humbling occasions, to shew you from whence ye are fallen. And can a people so greatly corrupted expect that their enemies will not despise them, on the one hand; or that God, on the other, will enable them, like their more virtuous ancestors, to make the nations tremble and stand in awe of them?

O my friends, let me conjure you not to seek out for a partial reason of the evils that surround you! Do not lay them at the doors of Government only: No---the cause is an united one: it is their's, it is your's, it is the whole nation's guilt, that has brought you into your present complicated

complicated state of distress. Not only the sacred history, but the history of almost all countries, will afford you proofs sufficient, that a provoked God will not prosper the counsels of a wicked nation, nor give its senators wisdom.

“ Remember then from whence ye
 “ are fallen, and repent, and do the first
 “ works.” Return to your duty to God--your neighbours--and yourselves. To your duty to God, as his church---by bringing down every lofty thought of man to his sacred revelation, and in singleness of heart worshipping him in spirit and in truth. To your duty to your neighbours, as a people---by scrupulously discharging the various obligations you owe to one another, as honest men, and fellow citizens. And to your duty to yourselves, in the more private characters of husbands and wives, ---parents and children,---masters and servants;---in a word, as accountable beings, who are one day individually to stand before the awful tribunal of
 almighty

almighty God, to be judged for all your actions here below.

To work this happy change, and thereby incline God to be gracious to us, is the end and design of these days of humiliation; and if they do not answer the purposes for which they were appointed, they will be only solemn mockeries of the Almighty;---plunge us still deeper into guilt,---and most probably hasten that fatal period, when he will remove his providential care and protection from us, and leave us an easy prey to our insulting foes.

Do not, my friends, look upon these merely as words of course upon this occasion, or as the severe assertions of a rigid declaimer:---But hear how God has threatened, and in what manner he has punished disobedient churches and nations; and then think, and be alarmed for yourselves! “ * Behold, “ the days come, saith the Lord, that I “ will

“ will send a famine in the land; not
 “ a famine of bread, nor a thirst of
 “ water, but of hearing the word of
 “ the Lord: and they shall wander
 “ from sea to sea, and from the North
 “ even to the East shall they run to
 “ and fro, to seek the word of the Lord,
 “ and shall not find it.” And again;
 “ * If ye will not hearken unto me,
 “ but despise my statutes, and abhor
 “ my judgments---I will do this unto
 “ you, ye shall sow your seed in vain,
 “ for your enemies shall eat it; and I
 “ will set my face against you, and
 “ ye shall be slain before your enemies;
 “ and I will scatter you, and draw
 “ out a sword after you; and your
 “ land shall be desolate, and your
 “ cities waste.”

Thus did God threaten the Jews,
 both as a church and people; and how
 fully and finally these threatenings were
 accomplished by the dispersion and ruin

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of

* Leviticus xiv. 26, &c.

of that nation, in both those characters, I need not say: the whole world have been witnessess of it.

But there is one circumstance relating to that awful event which I cannot forbear mentioning. It is recorded in the history of the Jews, that when that sinful people had filled up the measure of their iniquities, a dreadful voice was heard in their temple, saying, "Let us depart hence:" intimating that God and his holy angels were then departing from them, and withdrawing their care and providence over them: and presently after the abomination of desolation was brought upon them, so that they have ceased ever since, not only to be the church and people of God, but also a nation; being scattered and dispersed up and down the world, and made a by-word and reproach among all mankind.

From this heavy judgment, let us turn our eyes to the alarming threatening in my text.---Has not that threatening been fulfilled? And where are the

the rest of the seven famous churches of Asia, which are so particularly mentioned in these three first chapters of the Revelation of St. John? Did not a provoked God strengthen the hands of Turks and Saracens, to punish them for their corruptions? Are there even any traces of them left? Have they not totally ceased to exist? And is not that whole country, where they once flourished, enveloped in the darkness of ignorance, barbarity, and mahometanism?

These are very awful considerations indeed! may they sink so deeply into the hearts of the unhappy people of this land, that they may see their danger before it be too late; and be enabled by the assistance of divine grace, to apply to themselves this promise of the Almighty to a revolted people;
 “* Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith
 “ the Lord, and I will not cause mine
 D 2 “ anger

“ anger to fall upon you,---for I am
 “ merciful.”

O let not those Advantages which God hath given you over your enemies, puff you up with pride, induce you to think more highly of yourselves than you ought to think, and prevent this wished effect! Remember, that the Almighty tries his rebellious creatures by smiles as well as frowns: nor does he, till they are deaf to every call of his providence, permit the greatness of his fury to light upon them. Look then upon your late Successes, as marks of his long-suffering mercy to an undeserving people; and may a due sense of them lead you to repentance, thanksgiving and praise!

Then indeed, may ye hope, that God will continue to go forth with your fleets and armies: that his almighty hand will ever be over them, and the light of his countenance shine upon them. Then, strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, ye may venture to defy the united preparations

parations of your insulting foes: and may at last expect to see the haughty House of Bourbon bowing again to its wonted victors;---America returning to its parent;---and smiling peace, with plenty and commerce by her side, once more blessing this happy Isle.

That these may be the speedy effects of a speedy, national repentance; accompanied with every former mercy, which we have enjoyed, both as a church and people; may God grant, for Jesus Christ's sake! *Amen.*

F I N I S.

parishioners of your interesting fates; and
may at last expect to see the haughty
House of Bourbon bowing again to its
wondered hosts;—America returning to
its parent, and finding peace, with
glorious and commerce by her side, once
more to live this happy life.

I have written many of the speedy effects
of a holy, and repentance; ac-
cording to the words of your former prophecy,
which was fulfilled, both as a
sign and a promise, for

4 OC 58

